The Princess of Umpapa

by

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The Princess of Umpapa

A story of love and redemption, fear and courage, and the compassion of others.

Chief Rami and Princess Jackqui

Once upon a time, in the land of the Anasazi Indians of Mogollon Rim, lived the tiny people of the tribe of Umpapa. The sun smiled on the people and scattered sunbeams through their black hair and the moon gave their skin a special glow. The stars sprinkled starlight in the people's eyes and gave them night vision. The rainbow gave the people beautiful dark eyes and dusty rose for their lips and cheeks.

The people of Umpapa were special too. The little people were sent by the Spirit Father to help the Anasazi Indian tribes scattered on Mother Earth. They made moccasins and sandals to protect the Indians' feet. The Anasazi Indians worked hard to make a living out of the desert floor while building their wonderful cliff dwellings. Each member of the tribe had a job to do, and for the tribe to survive the harsh weather, each had to do his share. The older women made the clothing, cooked the food, and cared for the children. Many times they did not have the time or energy to keep up with the moccasins the women made for their feet.

Every night the people of Umpapa would leave their village and venture into the land of the Anasazi. They would gather the yucca and weave them into ropes and make sandals, or pluck rabbit fur to line the moccasins made from deer hide to protect the feet from the cold. They would work quickly and quietly, humming softly as they went about their jobs. When morning came the tiny people would be gone and those in need would awaken to find new sandals or moccasins.

During special ceremonies, Chief Rami of the tribe of Umpapa would gather his people into the secret ceremonial chambers or kivas to tell of their deeds. The tiny people, with happiness in their hearts, would gather around the fire in the Kiva lodge and tell their elders of their deeds. All except the Princess of Umpapa.

Princess Jackqui was different from the rest of the tribe. She had black hair and dark eyes, but her hair did not shine with sunbeams nor did her eyes sparkle with starlight. She was so lazy and selfish that the sun, the moon, and the stars hid behind the clouds when she ventured out doors.

The princess was the only child born to Chief Rami and Chiefteess Seena, and they spoiled her. She was hateful and rude to the

tribe and refused to go out with them when they went to the cliff dwellings of the Anasazi Indians at night. The princess had never helped anyone in her life.

One day as the princess was nearing her eleventh birthday, she approached her father and rudely shoved aside the tiny brave who was making a new spear thrower for him.

"Father," She demanded, "I want an albino deer fur, white as snow, for my birthday."

Chief Rami stared at his daughter. When had she grown into such a hateful person?

"Not now, Jackqui, I am busy," her father replied.

"Oh, Father, who is more important? Me or him?" she asked, casting a scornful glance at Pico, the tiny brave.

Chief Rami looked at his daughter in sorrow. Of all the people in the village to display unkindness, why did it have to be his daughter, the princess of Umpapa? He realized he was partly to blame for spoiling her so, but now was the time for her to learn how to be a

caring, gracious princess and set an example for the tiny people of Umpapa.

"No! Daughter, you will not get a deer fur. Now go away and I will talk to you later," her father said giving her a stern look.

Jackqui was shocked. Her father had never looked at her that way, let alone said "No" to her! She walked away slowly and fumed about how unfair her father was to refuse her the one thing she wanted most for her birthday. He was starting to act like the people of the village. They all refused to do anything she told them to do until she reminded them who she was. She had intended to talk to her father about their behavior toward her. They never had shown her the respect due to a princess and several times she caught them laughing at her!

As the sun was preparing to paint his picture in the sky to welcome the moon and the stars, Jackqui realized her father was not going to give in. She moped about her hut, plotting how she could make her father sorry he had treated her this way. Suddenly she came up with an idea. She would run away! She sneaked around the back of the village, then ran down the path toward the forest. The air had started to cool and she wished she had grabbed her rabbit fur.

It did not matter though because soon her father would go to their hut to have their talk and find her gone. He would immediately form a search party to find his daughter before dark. He would be filled with sorrow and remorse at the way he had treated her and would beg her forgiveness and give her the white fur she wanted.

At the edge of the forest the path split in two, with one path going to the cliff dwellings of the Anasazi and the other path going deep into the forest where the dreaded tree spirits lived. The princess had never gone out with any of the people and she had no idea which path to take. She decided to take the path to her right and hoped it did not lead to the land of the tree spirits.

Jackqui knew that many years ago when the humans first came to this land, they had cut down many trees to build their homes. When a tree was injured and died before its time, or was cut down, it's spirit left the tree to live in another part of the forest. As time went on, the tree spirits formed the tribe of the Lost Ones. They became mean and would attack and eat any animal that ventured into their forest. Jackqui shivered, she certainly did not want to meet any tree spirits!

As Jackqui walked she noticed that the giant oak trees grew very close together. Very little of the setting sun peeked through the branches. It grew dark quickly and Jackqui could not see where she was going. She stumbled and fell, scraping her knee. Oh, where was the search party? They should have caught up with her by now!

Because the moon and the stars always hid from Jackqui, she did not have the starlight that enabled the tiny people of Umpapa to see at night. Jackqui could not see anything in the dark. She shivered in the cold and her scraped knee hurt. She lay curled in a ball on the ground and began to cry.

A small gray mouse huddling under a pile of leaves watched the tiny girl stumble and fall.

"Who is she and why is she alone?" He asked himself.

Her sobbing echoed loudly through the still forest. Soon every forest creature would know where she was!

"Shut up that sniffling!" He hissed, "Do you want to tell the tree spirits where we are?"

Jackqui sat up and looked into the dark, but she could not see where the voice was coming from.

"Who are you to talk to me that way? Do you know who I am?" Jackqui demanded angrily.

"I don't care who you are. I do care that the tree spirits do not know where I am!" the voice answered. "Just who are you?"

"I am the princess of Umpapa," Jackqui answered arrogantly.

The mouse eyed the girl warily. Her hair was dark without the shine of the sunbeams. Her eyes were dull, her lips and cheeks had little color, and her skin was a flat tan. He didn't know who she was, but he knew who she wasn't.

"I do not know who you are, but you are not the princess of Umpapa," he declared. "Everyone knows the tiny people of Umpapa have sunbeams in their dark hair and starlight in their dark eyes. And you do not."

Just as Jackqui was trying to think up a reason for being different, she heard the sounds of scurrying away.

"Who are you?" Jackqui asked the darkness.

Jacqui did not get an answer. The silence of the forest was loud to her ears. She was tired so she laid down and waited for the search party to find her.

She fell asleep dreaming of the dreaded tree spirits and the forest that used to be.

At one time, huge live oaks, firs, junipers, pines, hemlocks, redwood, spruces, and yew all grew in the forest. There was not as much water in the area now, and many of the trees died and joined the Lost Ones. The tree spirits fled the dying or destroyed trees, but they had nowhere to go because the living trees would not allow the spirits to occupy them. The angry tree spirits took the form of hideous creatures and vowed to destroy all healthy trees and any other forest dwellers. Nothing was safe. Even the tiny people of Umpapa were in danger from being eaten by them.

As the night crept by, the air grew cooler and Jackqui became chilled. She curled into a ball, using the fallen leaves around her for a bed. She couldn't go back to sleep. She kept remembering that the voice had mentioned the tree spirits. Jackqui had never seen one, but the villager who had seen them had described them as horrible. They were huge with green, scaly skin, big eyes that stuck out of their faces, and long, sharp teeth.

As Jackqui slowly grew warm under her blanket of leaves, her eyes grew heavy and soon she was asleep, dreaming of the dreadful tree spirits.

Jackqui suddenly jerked awake! Something was tightening around her ankles. Standing over her was a tree spirit! He was tying her ankles together with a vine in his large hands! He gave her a cruel grin as he worked. After he had tied her hands, he slung her over his shoulder and began going deeper into the forest. As he loped along, he sang a frightening song to Princess Jackqui.

"Breakfast I have caught, Oh,
Breakfast I have caught.
Yummy, yummy, yummy,
Breakfast I have caught."

Jackqui was so frightened she could hardly breathe. She wiggled, trying to get her hands loose. The tree spirit laughed, for he knew her efforts were useless. Even if she could get free, he was much larger and stronger than she was. Jackqui could imagine those sharp teeth crunching her small body. Terror filled her. She had to get away! Poor father, he would never know what happened to his little princess.

Suddenly, Jackqui was flying through the air, landing with a "whomp" as a bed of ferns broke her fall. As she rolled on her side, she felt something gnawing at the vine that bound her. She tried to scream, but the fall had knocked the breath out of her. Only a small squeak escaped.

"Be quiet! Do you want to let the tree spirit to know where we are?"

Jackqui recognized the voice from the dark she had heard earlier.

"Quick, take my tail!" Jackqui felt something thrust into her hands.

"Now hold on and run!" the voice said.

Jackqui did not have time to reply. The tail took off at a fast pace through the forest. Occasionally Jackqui would trip, and the tail would pause long enough for her to get back on her feet.

It was getting lighter in the forest and Jackqui could see the tail belonged to a small gray mouse. The mouse twisted and turned through the forest, staying away from the well worn path.

The sun was high in the sky, trying to peek between the branches of the trees, before the little mouse stopped.

"We will rest here until night." He informed Jackqui.

She dropped to the ground, grateful for the chance to rest, but she was still afraid the tree spirit would find them. The little mouse hopped to the base of one of the trees and began to grasp twigs between his teeth and move them aside.

"Well, don't just sit there. Help me," the mouse ordered.

Jackqui got to her feet and helped the mouse clear the twigs away from the base of the tree. To her surprise, there was a hole under the tree trunk. It formed into a tunnel, twisting its way around the roots.

The mouse placed a few twigs in front of the opening after they had crawled inside, and then curled up in a furry ball and went to sleep. Jackqui thought she would not be able to sleep, but as she curled up next to the mouse, she could not keep her eyes open.

Much later, Jackqui awoke to find the mouse sitting near the entrance of the hole, looking out between the twigs.

"Thank you for saving my life," she said quietly.

She suddenly realized this was the first time she had ever said thanks to anyone.The mouse shrugged his shoulders.

"What happened? How did you manage to get me away from the tree spirit?" She asked.

The mouse shrugged his small, gray shoulders again. "It wasn't much. He was so proud of himself for catching you that he got careless."

"But how...?" Jackqui asked.

"Everyone knows tree spirits are stupid. I just dug a hole in the path and covered it with leaves. When he came tromping down the path, he stuck his big foot in it and tripped. He threw you into the ferns as he fell."

Jackqui drew a deep breath. "My name is Jackqui. What is yours?" she asked.

The mouse turned to look at her. "I am called Little Bit." He answered.

He sat twitching his nose at her. He cocked his head to one side and asked, "What are you doing in the forest?"

As Jackqui told him her story, she realized how selfish she had been. She had been cruel to her father and the little people of Umpapa. She was very ashamed of herself, but she told the mouse the truth. He never commented on her story. He just listened. Jackqui sat looking at the tunnel as it disappeared under the roots.

"Is this your home?" she asked.

The mouse shook his head and replied, "No. This belonged to a warren of rabbits at one time, but they disappeared."

The mouse looked around and hopped near Jackqui and sat looking at her. "I live near the edge of the forest with my mother and little brother. I was searching for a new home for my family when I saw you fall. I had wandered farther than I had planned to and had turned back when I heard the tree spirit coming through the woods."

Little Bit hopped to the entrance and peered out between the twigs. "I hid under some leaves," he continued, "and saw that the tree spirit had you over his shoulder. I hurried ahead of him and dug a hole in the path."

"Why did you help me?" She questioned. "The tree spirit could have gotten you too. Weren't you afraid?"

Little Bit shrugged his shoulders again. "I did not stop to think about being afraid. I saw you were in trouble and needed help. My parents taught me to help others if I could, so I helped you."

Without saying another word, Little Bit left the hole. Shortly he came scurrying back with a nut in his mouth. He cracked the nut open and looked at Jackqui.

"You had better eat something. We still have a long way to go."

Jackqui bit into the nut and was surprised to find it was delicious. She had not eat anything since breakfast the day before and she realized she was very hungry.

As soon as the sun set and the forest grew dark, Little Bit and Jackqui resumed their journey. They walked without stopping until daybreak.

When Little Bit stopped, Jackaui slumped to the ground. She had never been this tired before. Little Bit ran under a scrub oak bush and disappeared into a small hole. Wearily, Jackqui dragged herself up and followed him.

Inside the hole she found a sparsely furnished room divided by some fern branches held up with twigs. Behind the branches, Little Bit was sitting beside a mouse lying on a bed of dried grass. At the foot of the bed was a smaller, younger mouse who was sniffling and wiping his eyes. Little Bit looked up as Jackqui stepped behind the branches.

"Jackqui, this is my mother," he said.

His mother, Mrs. Mouse, turned her head to look at Jackqui.

"Welcome, my dear," she said weakly before turning to her son. "Little Bit, see if there are any nuts left."

Little Bit left the hole in search of nuts. Jackqui followed him outside.

"Little Bit, what is wrong with your mother?" She asked.

Little Bit blinked furiously to keep tears of frustration out of his eyes.

"It's my fault." His voice wavered. "Ever since my father died, I have been unable to bring enough food home to feed us all. Mother insists that Pipi and I eat what I do manage to find, so she has become weak and ill from the lack of food."

Jackqui stood silent. She had never done without a meal until she ran away. She thought of how hungry she was and could not imagine going without food so someone else might eat. Jackqui walked to stand near the small mouse. She had an unusual urge to put her arms around his small shoulders and comfort him.

"When did your father die?" She asked softly.

Little Bit stood quietly, looking down at the ground. Finally, he raised his head with a faraway look in his eyes.

His voice was barely above a whisper. "For the past two summers, there has been little rain at the edge of the forest. The trees did not produce many nuts. The squirrels got what little that was produced, leaving very little for my family."

He continued sadly, "Early this spring my father went into the forest in search of a new home for us. He never came back. I searched for him many days before I found a rabbit that told me he had seen a tree spirit going deep into the forest with my father thrown over his shoulder."

Little Bit swallowed hard, fighting the tears from rolling down his gray cheeks. He turned and hopped into the forest in search of food.

Jackqui went back inside the sparsely furnished mouse home. She thought of her father and chills went over her body at the thought of a tree spirit walking away with her father over his shoulder.

Looking around, she compared her hut in the village and her comfortable bed with a rabbit fur blanket to Mrs. Mouse's bed of grass. Jackqui's bed was mattress of soft rabbit fur. It was very comfortable. That grass was stiff and did not look as if it would be easy to sleep on.

Jackqui sat beside Mrs. Mouse's bed and asked, "Is there something I could do to make you more comfortable?"

Mrs. Mouse smiled and weakly shook her head. She told Jackqui how worried she had been about Little Bit going into the forest. Most of the food near their home was gone and she was too weak and ill to help him hunt for food. Pipi cried often with hunger and Mrs. Mouse was afraid he was going to become ill and possibly die unless he had something to eat.

Just then, Little Bit entered with a half eaten nut discarded by a squirrel. Jackqui stomach growled as she watched Pipi eat what was left of the nut. She knew that both Little Bit and his mother were also hungry. Jackqui begin to cry. She realized how spoiled and selfish she was. Little Bit had rescued her instead of finding food for his fami-

ly. Her father would be nearly sick with worry and the people of the tribe would be in danger if they tried to find her. If something happened to one of the Umpapa, it would be all her fault.

"I am so sorry," she sobbed.

Jackqui realized that was the first time she had ever apologized to anyone. Mrs. Mouse placed a weak arm around her shoulders, pulled her close and held Jackqui as she cried.

"Now my dear, don't you fret," Mrs. Mouse crooned as she wiped the tears from Jackqui's face. "There are good times and bad times for all of us. It is what we make of them that matters."

"Oh, I wish I could help," Jackqui said hopelessly.

She thought about the security and safety of her village and how she had taken it all for granted. If only she could...

"Little Bit!" she exclaimed excitedly. "Would you take me to my village?"

"What?" Little Bit was startled by her question.

"The village!" she exclaimed excitedly. "My father, Chief Rami, will help."

"Please," Little Bit said disgustedly, "Don't start that again?"

"Trust me, I am truly Princess Jackqui of Umpapa." Jackqui pleaded. "You will see that I am telling you the truth."

"So you say," he muttered.

He sat looking at the girl. There was something different about her. Her face had a softer, gentler look. Her eyes begged him to say that he would take her. What would it hurt? If she was telling the truth, then there would be a Shaman to help his mother. If not, maybe he could get food to help keep his family alive.

He got up and hopped to the entrance of the hole and looked over his shoulder at Jackqui. "Well, what are you waiting for?"

The sun was rising over the horizon when Jackqui and Little Bit burst into the Chief's hut.

"Father! Father!" Jackqui cried as she flung herself into her father's arms. He had just risen from his desk when she came in and barely had time to brace himself from her onslaught. He wrapped his arms around his daughter and held her tightly as tears streamed down his cheeks. He had feared he would never see her again.

"Oh Daughter, I have been so worried." He could not seem to turn her loose. "Where have you been?"

Jackqui raised her head and gently led her father to his couch. She held his hand as she told him of her adventure and how Little Bit had saved her. Chief Rami shook Little Bit's hand and thanked him over and over for saving his daughter from the tree spirit. A stunned Little Bit merely nodded his head. He listened as Jackqui told the chief about his mother and brother. As she outlined her plan, he could hardly believe it.

"Father, the old visitor's hut could be fixed up and I would take care of Mrs. Mouse and nurse her back to health. I promise," Jackqui pleaded, "and as there is no food in the forest or safety from the tree spirits, they could live here in the village with us." Jackqui rushed on without taking time to breathe.

The chief chuckled, "Nice to have you back, Jackqui. However, we will have to ask for volunteers to go into the forest to get Mrs. Mouse. I cannot order anyone to do this."

Chief Rami assembled the people around the fire in the center of the Kiva Lodge. He explained that Jackqui had a story to tell them, then motioned for Jackqui to stand.

Jackqui was afraid to stand before all the people she had been rude and unkind to and ask them to risk their lives to save her friends. Her friends, she smiled at the thought. She had never had a friend before. She drew a deep breath and began to tell them her story. As she talked, she noticed the people were smiling and looking at her differently. There was respect and yes, even love for her in their eyes. She turned and looked at her father. He wore a wide grin and Little Bit was smiling too. She was puzzled and gave Little Bit a questioning look.

Little Bit smiled and leaned over to whisper, "Jackqui, your hair is shining with sunbeams." She looked up and the sun was smiling at her and warming her with his rays.

Many years later, on the edge of the village of Umpapa, an old gray mouse with white whiskers sat watching his many great-grandchildren play. Just then a tiny, gray headed woman walked his way with a bright smile on her face. The old mouse could not keep his huge smile from answering hers. His heart nearly burst with love as he watched Chieftess Jackqui walk gracefully across the grass.

As Jackqui drew close she heard Little Bit ask his grandson, "Sonny, did I ever tell you about the time I singlehandedly whipped a tree spirit?"

"Yes, Grandpa, but I love that story. Tell it again," he pleaded.

"Well, it was back before any mice lived here at the village." He cast a mischievous grin at the approaching woman. "The princess was a spoiled little girl."

The Legend of the Anasazi Indian Tribes
Where Did They Go?

The Ancient Puebloans (Anasazi) were a prehistoric Native American civilization which appeared around 1200 BC and centered around the present day Four Corners area of the Southwest United States including Chaco Canyon, Mesa Verde, and Cayenta.

The Anasazi were basket makers, hunters and gatherers and cultivators of crops.Their clothing was made of fur, leather, and especially round-toed plant-fiber sandals.They created petroglyphs and pottery.

They built large cliff dwelllings, pueblos and towers where they would hide when being attacked by other tribes.

The mystery of the Anasazi was where and why they disappeared around 1300 AD.

One theory is that a severe drought from 1275 to 1300 caused them to move. Other theories are that a volcanic eruption or warring tribes made them abandon the whole area. At Chaco Canyon in New Mexico, a five story dwelling with 800 rooms still stands.

The most likely scenario is that the Anasazi were integrated into other tribes along the Little Colorado and Rio Grande Rivers.

Nobody knows what happened to the
tiny people of **Umpapa**.